

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-05
IO-14 ACDA-10 /082 W
-----114676 051631Z /44

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USDEL TAIF IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7612
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 5810

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS)
SUBJECT: ISRAELI MEDIA REPORTS ON VANCE MIDDLE EAST TOUR

SUMMARY. ISRAELI MEDIA REPORT ON CURRENT VANCE MISSION, EXPRESSING NO SURPRISE AT SYRIAN REJECTION OF EGYPTIAN "WORKING GROUP" PROPOSAL. THE CABINET WILL DECIDE ON ISRAELI NEGOTIATING TEAM ON SUNDAY. ISRAELI OFFICIALS REPORTEDLY EXPECT VANCE TO CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS IN NEW YORK DESPITE NEGATIVE REPLY FROM ASSAD. A COMMENTATOR WORNDERS IF SAUDI ARABIA WILL PRESSURE SYRIA. AND RABIN SEES VANCE TRIP AS FIRST TEST OF BEGIN POLICY. END SUMMARY.

1. SECRETARY VANCE'S CURRENT SWING THROUGH THE MIDDLE EAST IS RECEIVING FULL COVERAGE IN THE ISRALI MEDIA, WITH REPORTS FROM WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENTS NUMEROUS COMMEN-
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TARIES ON ME PEACE PROCESS, AND A MODEST AMOUNT OF RE- PORTED "REACTIONS" FROM UNNAMED JERUSALEM SOURCES. BEGIN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE GENERALLY NOT BEEN MAKING COMMENTS FOR PUBLIC DISSEMINATION.

2. PRESIDENT SADAT'S PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP OF ARAB AND ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTERS WAS GENER-

ALLY WELL-RECEIVED IN ISRAEL: THE GOVERNMENT LET IT BE KNOWN THAT IT WOULD PARTICIPATE AND THE MEDIA APPLAUDED SADAT'S SUGGESTION AS A MEANS WHEREBY THE PROBLEM OF PLO REPRESENTATION MIGHT BE AVOIDED. FOR PRECISELY THIS REASON, THE SYRIANS AND PLO WERE EXPECTED TO REJECT THE PROPOSAL, AND WHEN THEY DID SO CONFIRMED ISRAELI PREDICTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, ACCORDING TO A RADIO ISRAEL REPORT AUGUST 4, "THE ASSESSMENT IN THE CAPITAL IS THAT ASAD WISHES TO MAINTAIN THE GOOD ATMOSPHERE IN HIS RELATIONS WITH WASHINGTON AND DOES NOT WANT THE BLAME FOR THE FAILURE OF THE VANCE TRIP TO FALL ON HIM."

3. IN ANOTHER REPORT AUGUST 4, ISRAEL TV ANNOUNCED THAT "ISRAEL WILL REACT TO THE SUBSTANCE OF VANCE'S PROPOSALS, WITH THE ONLY NO BEING THE REFUSAL TO ALLOW PARTICIPATION OF A PLO REPRESENTATIVE IN THE WORKING GROUP, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE WOULD BE MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY CONCERNING THE PROCEDURES OF THE TALKS IN NEW YORK OR WASHINGTON." AN OPPOSITE POSITION WAS TAKEN BY INFORMATION ADVISOR SHMUEL KATZ, WHO TOLD DAVAR'S DANNY BLOCH THAT "WE SHALL NOT ENTER INTO DISCUSSIONS WITH VANCE ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES. I DON'T KNOW HOW THE DISCUSSIONS WILL DEVELOP, BUT I ASSUME THAT THERE WILL BE NO DEVIATION FROM THE POSITION WE HAVE ADOPTED FROM THE OUTSET, THAT IS, THAT WE WILL ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS."

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TIATIONS ON A PEACE TREATY WITH THE ARABS."

4. PRESS REPORTS ANNOUNCE THAT THE CABINET WILL DECIDE ON SUNDAY (AUGUST 7) THE MAKE-UP OF ISRAEL'S NEGOTIATING TEAM: IT MAY BE LIMITED TO BEGIN, DAYAN, AND WEIZMAN OR IT MAY ALSO INCLUDE EHRLICH, BURG, AND SHARON.

5. CITING SOURCES IN JERUSALEM, YEDIOT REPORTER TZIMUKI STATES THAT ISRAELI OFFICIALS ASSUME THAT VANCE WILL STEP UP HIS EFFORTS TO PREPARE FOR GENEVA TALKS WHEN THE ME FOREIGN MINISTERS COME TO THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY NEXT MONTH; VANCE WILL PERSIST IN HIS ONGOING EFFORTS DESPITE THE NEGATIVE ANSWERS OUT OF DAMASCUS. ISRAELI OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT ASAD, BY HIS REJECTION OF THE SADAT WORKING-GROUP PROPOSAL, HAS SHOWN THAT HE IS NOT READY FOR AN EARLY CONVENING OF THE GENEVA TALKS IN OCTOBER, NOR IS HE READY AT THIS STVAGE FOR PLO REPRESENTATION IN GENEVA, ACCORDING TO TZIMUKI.

6. COMMENTING ON THE VANCE MISSION, YEDIOT'S GUINEY SAYS THAT ITS SUCCESS OR FAILURE WILL TO A LARGE EXTENT

DEPEND ON SAUDI ARABIA. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THE SAUDIS WILL EXERT THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE SYRIANS NOW AND WHETHER THE PRESSURE WILL BE SUFFICIENTLY STRONG. A SAUDI-INSPIRED ARAB SUMMIT MAY BE GENERATED BY THE FAILURE OR PARTIAL FAILURE OF THE VANCE MISSION, SAYS GUINEY.

6. EX-PRIME MINISTER RABIN WRITES IN YEDIOT THAT ISRAELIS WILL NOW PERHAPS FIND OUT WHETHER THE SECRETARY OF STATE DECIDED TO ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROPOSALS MR. BEGIN MADE TO PRESIDENT CARTER. RABIN FEARS, HOWEVER, THAT VANCE WILL PRESENT T BEGIN AS U.S. PROPOSALS THE WELL-KNOWN STANDS MADE BY PRESIDENT CARTER. AND IF VANCE BRINGS UP THE IDEA OF ISRAELI-JORDANIAN "TRUSTEE-
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SHIP OVER JUDEA AND SAMARIA FOR A GIVEN PERIOD OF TIME, TO BE FOLLOWED BY A REFERENDUM," IT WOULD BE "GRAVE IN THE EXTREME." THAT VANCE MAY BE BRINGING AMERICAN PROPOSALS DRAWN UP WITHOUT PRIOR COORDINATION WITH ISRAEL MEANS DANGER FOR ISRAEL'S VITAL INTERESTS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
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Decapton Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770890/aaaacypy.tel
Line Count: 142
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2d56e360-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1692212
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ISRAELI MEDIA REPORTS ON VANCE MIDDLE EAST TOUR SUMMARY. ISRAELI MEDIA REPORT ON CURRENT VANCE MISSION, EXPRESSING NO SURPRISE AT SYRIAN REJECTION OF EGYPT
TAGS: OVIP, US, IS, (VANCE, CYRUS R)
To: AMMAN TAIF
Type: TE
vdkgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2d56e360-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009